

JOHN MILTON

By HAMILTON W. MABIE

Author and Editor



MENTOR GRAVURES

JOHN MILTON AT
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MENTOR GRAVURES

MILTON'S COTTAGE

MILTON DICTA-
TING "PARADISE
LOST" TO HIS
DAUGHTERS

JOHN MILTON

By P. Krämer



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"He knew himself to sing and build the lofty rhyme."—*Lycidas*

THE Puritans objected to the observance of Christmas, and it seems, therefore, incongruous that the noblest Christmas poem in English came from the hand of the foremost Puritan poet. But one must remember that it was written in youth, while Milton was still under the influence of the joyous spirit of the Elizabethan singers, to whom poetry was a music not yet set to religious themes. Those who feel that in spite of "Paradise Lost" Milton would have been a greater poet if he had been born before the fierce disputatious age of the Revolution base their judgment on the beautiful lyrical pieces of the golden days before the storm broke on the garden and silenced the birds. The "Hymn on The Nativity," written at Christ's College, Cambridge, by an undergraduate, is not far from the conventional poetry of the period; but as the poet rises to his theme he shows himself the master of a very noble style. The imagery is rich and impressive, and the rhythm predicts the splendid stateliness of the poet's later work. It is not a Christmas song after the manner of the earlier Christmas songs: it is a hymn fit for cathedral organs.

Milton is, after Shakespeare, the greatest figure in English literature; but he is a solitary figure. Everybody who knows anything about



MILTON AS A CHILD

in homes of leisure; and Milton's poetry and prose have the dignity and volume of the organ.

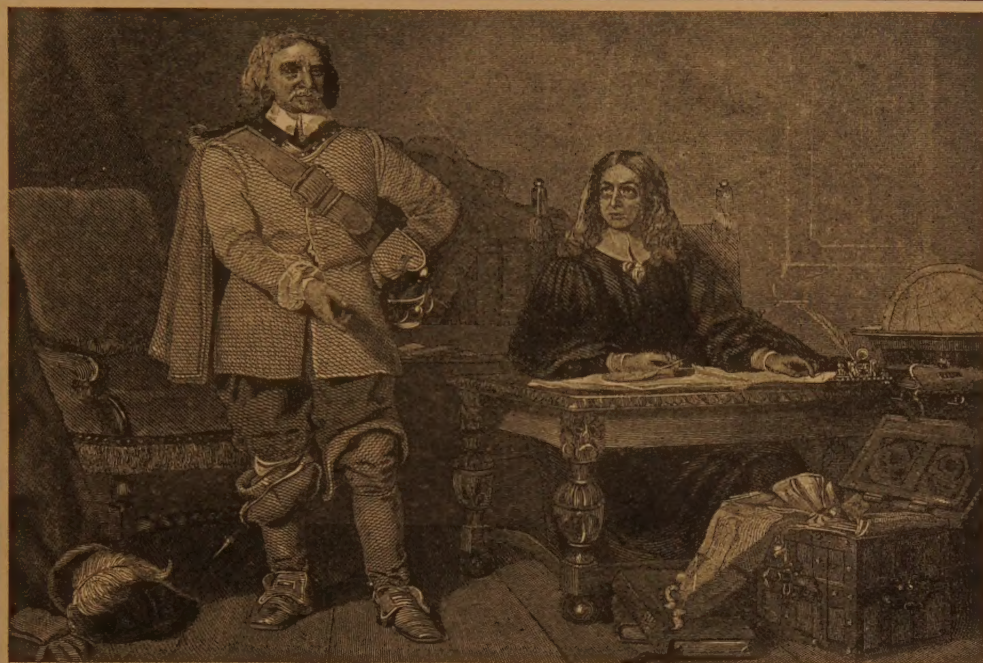
MILTON'S YOUTH

And Milton was not easy of access to the men and women of his time. He was courteous; but his manner was dignified rather than cordial. In person, as in his work, he had what Mathew Arnold has called the grand manner. He was a boy of singular beauty and a youth who could play the role of poet without dressing for the part; but he seems always to have been reserved and self-contained. The austerity of his later years probably did not surprise his fellow undergraduates in Christ's College, Cambridge, where the purity of his life, his beauty, and his refinement of manner prompted them to call him the "Lady of Christ's." But although stiff and formal, and with the tendency to rigidity which advancing years brought to Wordsworth, Milton was neither self-contained nor of a cold temperament: he was a very human person, passionate in opinion, violent in speech, and by no means easy to live with. He wrote some of the noblest lines in English, and both in prose and in verse attained the loftiest eloquence; but he was also a master of the art of abusing his adversaries, and his opinions were very much colored by his feelings and personal experiences.

He lived in a revolutionary age in religion, art, and political history; he was a poet, a scholar, a schoolmaster, a pamphleteer,



MILTON AT TWENTY



OLIVER CROMWELL, AS PROTECTOR OF ENGLAND,
DICTATING TO MILTON

This was during Milton's service as secretary for foreign
tongues and before blindness overcame him

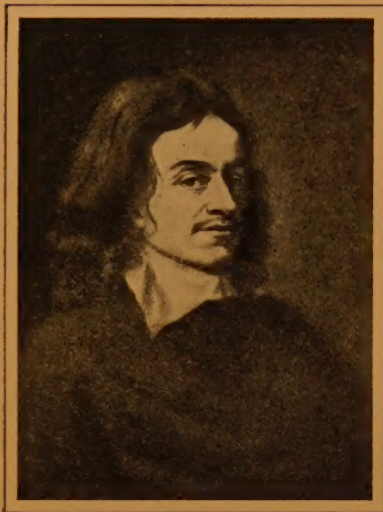
an office holder. In his later years he fell on evil times: the Commonwealth which he had served with noble ability disintegrated, the king came back, Milton was driven into hiding, he was overtaken with blindness, his wives died, and his daughters rebelled against the rigorous discipline of their home. But bereft and smitten he created, in the darkened years, the great work of which he dreamed in his youth and to which he dedicated his life.

That life divides itself into three periods: his youth fell in the closing years of the Renaissance; his maturity spanned the Puritan age; and he died under the Restoration. He was born on Bread Street, London, in 1608, the year in which Shakespeare left London and returned to Stratford, where he died eight years later. The Mermaid Tavern was not far from Milton's house, and Shakespeare, on one of his visits to London, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and other famous poets or wits who met in the old inn, may have seen the beautiful boy who was to write "Paradise Lost" playing in the streets.



AN ITALIAN LADY FINDS YOUNG
MILTON, SLUMBERING

An incident of the poet's life in Italy



JOHN MILTON

There was little time for play in Milton's life, and little inclination to play in his temperament: he was an arduous and tireless worker, whose inspiration was intermittent but whose life was vital with passionate endeavor. He came at the end of the great playtime of the Renaissance, when men met the challenge to daring, imagination, and action with splendid audacity, and counted no price too great to pay for achievement.

We think of Milton as the author of an epic dealing with the most tremendous issues of life; but it is quite possible that another century will care more for "Lycidas," "Il Penseroso," and "L'Allegro" than for "Paradise Lost," and think of him as most happily the poet in his lyrics rather

than in his epics. He was a studious boy at St. Paul's School in London, and an ardent lover of books at Christ College, Cambridge, and he had, even in youth, a settled determination to contribute a great work to English literature. His personal standards were high, for he regarded himself as set apart for a great mission; but his virtue bore the traces of the growing Puritan spirit,—it was serious and self-conscious.

EARLY POEMS

The happiest period in Milton's life and in his art were the years between 1632 and 1638 when his father was living at Horton, a little village not far from Windsor. The joy in life and the sense of freedom which gave a glowing impulse to poetry in Shakespeare's time were sinking, but not yet extinguished; and Milton's youthful genius responded to them with a group of poems in which tenderness and grace set seriousness of mood to a music at once sweet and solemn, like a lovely song heard in the woods at twilight. In this brief prelude to the years of strife that followed, full of polemical bitterness and passionate animosities, Milton's genius had the spontaneity and gaiety of mood which come even to great poets only in their happiest hours. The lines on Shakespeare, "Dear Son of Memory, great heir of Fame," have something of the artifice of the seventeenth century poets; but they have a lofty air, and the



THE HOLLIS BUST OF MILTON
This bust, which was taken from life, is
in Christ's College, England

grand manner was already within reach of the young poet. The "Sonnet to the Nightingale" seems to foretell the sweetness and grace of Herrick:

O Nightingale that on yon blooming spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still,
Thou with fresh hopes the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May.

"L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" have often been described as contrasted studies of day and night after the manner of Thorwaldsen's bas-reliefs. They are rather the records of two very different moods which often alternate in the life of men and women of artistic temperament.

"L'Allegro" is a jubilant celebration of the mood which welcomes the morning when the lark begins his flight, and the happy procession of sights and sounds in the woods and fields follows singing across the day. "Il Penseroso" is hushed and still: to the mood of exaltation has succeeded the mood of meditation, never far from melancholy. The imagery is no longer taken from "the hours that shine": one walks in the stillness of moonlight, hears the far-off curfew sound, sees the great stars moving across the night, watches the pageant of history, and sees again that

. . . gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall comes sweeping by.

These beautiful poems are somewhat overlaid, after the manner of the time, with classical allusion; but it is a mistake to call them descriptive poems. There are lines in which natural incident and appearance appear in magical beauty and completeness; but Milton was not a poet of Nature, and the landscape was to him not a thing apart from man, as it was to Wordsworth, nor a vital background of life charged with a tender and appealing life of its own, as it was to Burns. It was, rather, a store-house of imagery and illustration which subtly matched and expressed human emotions and moods.

The Elizabethan age delighted in elaborate spectacles, out-of-door *fêtes*, in which a lovely natural background served as the setting for a poetical drama. It is a curious fact that the great Puritan poet gave England, in "Comus," one of the last of the masks which embodied the extravagance and luxury of a pleasure-loving court and people.



MILTON'S HOUSE, LONDON

The tree in the foreground was planted by the poet



THE HOME OF MILTON, CHALFONT, ST. GILES, AS SEEN FROM THE ROAD

In 1637 a college friend of Milton's went down with a sinking ship in the Irish Sea. The event was commemorated by the publication of a little volume of verse written by Cambridge men. In a mass of uninspired verse "Lycidas" suddenly rises like a mountain over the monotony of a plain. It has the tinge of melancholy, the pensive beauty of elegy, but breaks away from the formalism of the period and reveals the passion and power of the poet of genius. The beauty-loving sixteenth century and the serious-minded seventeenth century meet in it: when Milton wrote again they had parted company.

LYCIDAS

"Lycidas" was written in 1637, "Paradise Lost" was begun in 1657; in those twenty years England passed through the throes of the Revolution, Puritanism dethroned Charles I, made Cromwell practically a dictator, disestablished the church, and in religion and politics divided Englishmen into warring factions. In this stormy struggle Milton became a passionate advocate of liberty in church and state, an eloquent defender of the Commonwealth, a writer of prose of commanding ability. He ceased to be a poet and became a radical reformer. When he returned to poetry he was a man of passionate seriousness of mood, of deep moral convictions,—the poet of the Puritan spirit.

MILTON IN ITALY

Between the studious quiet of the years at Horton and the tumult of civil strife Milton, like many fortunately situated and ambitious young Englishmen of the time, made a pilgrimage to Italy, the mother-country of modern intellectual freedom and of art. Since the time of Surrey, young

men of imagination had gone to Italy as young Americans of scholarly ambitions once went to Germany. Italy was then far in advance of western Europe in the gentler arts of civilization. The energy of the revival of classical leaning had spent itself; but the country was rich in ancient and later works of art, and the traditions of literary and scholarly activity were organized into academies and learned societies,—often devoted to the frivolities of knowledge, but full of charm to a cultivated Englishman. In Florence, Rome, Naples, the young poet was a distinguished guest, much flattered in Latin poems, which were doubtless pleasant reading even to a serious-minded youth of rigid standards and tastes. A trip to Genoa and Palestine was abandoned because the situation in England was becoming increasingly serious. An interesting incident on the homeward journey was the meeting of Milton and Galileo in Florence.

MILTON AS A WRITER OF PAMPHLETS

There was always something of the schoolmaster in Milton, and during the ten years which followed his return to England in 1639 he was a school teacher and a writer of polemic pamphlets. Many critics have lamented the loss to poetry of the poet's devotion to the public interests of the time; but he was a man as well as a poet, and the unrest of those years would have drawn from devotion to art a much less eager spirit than his. His active and passionate nature sent him into the heart of



MILTON'S COTTAGE AND GARDEN, AT CHALFONT, ST. GILES



MILTON AT SIXTY

the fray. He wrote pamphlets attacking the form of government of the Church of England with such bitterness that one of the archbishops described him as a "grim, lowering and bitter Fool."

Then he married Mary Powell, a girl of seventeen, daughter of a Cavalier squire. The young bride ran away to her home before the honeymoon was over; whereupon the poet wrote a fiery defense of divorce for incompatibility. There was no doubt fault on both sides; but in his happiest moods Milton could not have been easy to live with. Doctor Garnett has well said: "His famous 'He for God only, she for God in him' condenses every fallacy concerning woman's relation to her husband and her Maker."

Milton wrote also on education, a noble plea for freedom of printing and toleration in matters of opinion in the "Areopagitica"; in 1649 he startled England by a defense of regicide, followed later by a savage attack on the dead Charles I in "Ikonoklastes." Salmacius, a famous Latin scholar in Holland, writing as the advocate of Charles II, who was in exile, presented the cause of the monarchy, and Milton replied with a "Defence of the English People," in which the principles for which the writer stood were almost buried in personalities and abuse, in keeping with the practice of the age, but lamentably below the level of Milton's intellect. Meanwhile he had been appointed Latin secretary to the Council of State, and conducted correspondence with foreign governments and framed replies to serious attacks on the government. His work in poetry during this period was limited to a few sonnets, personal or political. Of the personal sonnets the finest is that "On His Blindness" which closes with the famous line:

They also serve who only stand and wait.

Of the political sonnets, that "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont" became, Wordsworth declared, "a trumpet whence he blew soul-animating strains, alas, too few." He had been warned that his work on the "Defence of the English People" would cost him his sight; but he felt that a great public duty had been laid on him, and he made the sacrifice deliberately. By 1652 he was totally blind, and two devoted assistants relieved him of details and routine. Many distinguished visitors sought him; and,



STATUE OF MILTON

undismayed by his first experience, he married twice in these darkened years and was fortunate in both marriages.

IMPRISONED AND FINED

He fell upon evil times: the Commonwealth was overthrown and the king was brought back to London. There could hardly have been a greater contrast than between the blind poet who had defended the killing of kings and Charles II, the accomplished pleasure lover, of whom it was said that he never said a foolish thing nor did a wise one. Many men less offensive than Milton were severely punished; but beyond four months' enforced seclusion and the payment of a fine he suffered no penalty. The tumult of the age receded from the blind poet, and the great work of which he dreamed in his youth began to take shape in his mind. His imagination craved a great theme, and many subjects appealed to him: he finally decided on the Fall of Man and the Redemp-



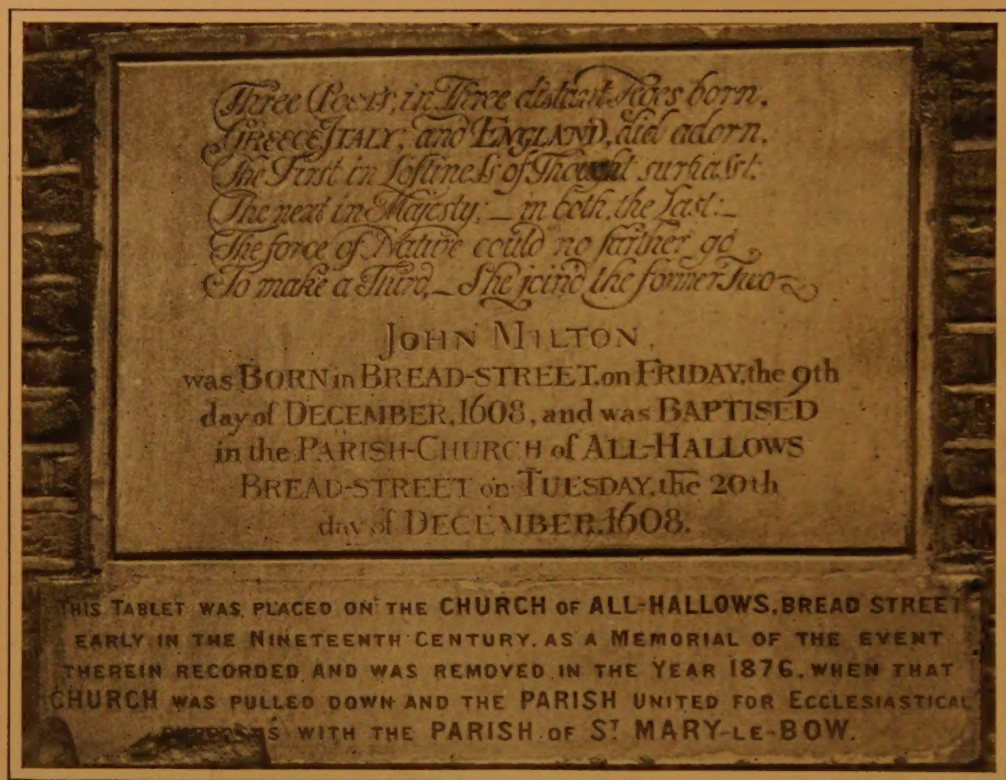
THE POET AT THE ORGAN

tion as possessing supreme interest for all men. It was the most sublime story in the literature of the world, and it offered the greatest opportunities for poetic treatment. It set upon the stage the two most striking figures of which the human imagination had conceived, and it dealt with the conflict between good and evil, the supreme mystery of life.

PARADISE LOST AND PARADISE REGAINED

"Paradise Lost" was finished in 1665 and was published in September, 1666, the year made memorable by the plague and the great fire in London. Five pounds, about twenty-five dollars, was paid to the author on publication, and he was assured of the payment of a similar amount for each succeeding edition up to twenty pounds. The first edition of thirteen hundred copies was sold in eighteen months. "Paradise Regained" was written before the publication of "Paradise Lost," but was not published until 1671.

The earlier poem is much the greater of the two in sustained power of imagination and in nobility of style. The religion of the Puritans was



THE MILTON TABLET ON THE CHURCH OF ALL-HALLOWS, LONDON

The other two poets referred to, are Homer, to whom is attributed the Iliad, and Dante, author of the Divine Comedy

that of the Old Testament, and Milton was far more successful in dealing with "powers and principalities" than in dealing with love. His portraiture of Satan is far more convincing than his portraiture of Christ. These poems are generally classed as epics; a word which describes "Paradise Lost" more accurately than "Paradise Regained." In the epic the story is more important than the characters; in the drama the characters are more important than the story. The distinction cannot be applied too literally, for in the earlier poem there are many dramatic passages; in the later poem there is a great deal of dialogue and description. The story of the Temptation is told with less vigor and greater simplicity.

THE GREATNESS OF PARADISE LOST

In "Paradise Lost," notwithstanding obvious defects, one is conscious of an air of greatness both in theme and in style. In harmony and music of English no other poem is to be classed with it. It is a classic of what Arnold called the grand style, in which majesty and beauty, march of imagery and music of cadence, are blended in lines which have not only strength but magical loveliness.

At that time all forms of poetry except the drama were written in rhyme; and in writing "Paradise Lost" in blank verse, Milton shocked the professional traditions of his art as severely as Dante shook the traditions of the Italian school when he wrote "The Divine Comedy" in Italian instead of Latin. To many people of taste "Paradise Lost" was for this reason as radical and as defective in form as were Whitman's poems to a host of American readers, accustomed to the orthodox forms with which the New England poets had continued the English tradition. Notwithstanding this innovation, the majesty of "Paradise Lost" was at once recognized by so great a critic and writer as "Dryden." That thirteen hundred copies of the poem were sold in eighteen months is sufficient evidence of its success.

It was a long way from the "Story of King Arthur" to the "Fall of Man" and the "Origin of Sin"; and it registers the development of Milton's mind and thought. He choose what was to his generation the supreme subject of human interest; and it was fortunate that he did, because the greatness of "Paradise Lost" depends as much on the greatness of the theme as on the greatness of its art.

"Samson Agonistes," published in 1671, closed Milton's career as a poet with a tragedy the severity of whose form does not conceal its disclosure of the poet's experiences in the somber years of lost sight and ruined hopes for liberty in England.

These poems, it must be remembered, were not written: they were dictated, ten, twenty, or thirty lines at a sitting, "leaning back obliquely in an easy chair, with his leg flung over the elbow of it." He died on the eighth of November, 1674, and his body was followed by a great crowd to St. Giles, Cripplegate, where it was interred in the chancel.



MILTON AT SIXTY-TWO

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

INTRODUCTION TO PROSE AND POETICAL WORKS OF JOHN MILTON

By Hiram Corson

MILTON

By Stopford A. Brooke

ESSAY ON MILTON

By T. B. Macaulay

AGE OF MILTON

By J. H. B. Masterman

JOHN MILTON

By W. P. Trent

MILTON AS SCHOOLBOY AND SCHOOLMASTER

By A. F. Leach

MILTON

By Richard Garnett

CRITICISMS ON MILTON

By J. Addison

JOHN MILTON

By M. Pattison

GREAT WRITERS (Chapter on Milton)

By George Woodberry

LIFE OF MILTON

By Dr. Samuel Johnson



What kind of a man was John Milton? Most of us cannot picture the author of "Paradise Lost" as a real human being. Too many of us set him apart on an Olympian height—and, incidentally, on a top shelf—and leave him there. It is hard for us to get at the real personality of a literary immortal. An eminent critical writer of seventy years ago made the observation that all biographies are, more or less, skeletons, and that this is notably true in the case of distinguished men. It is remarkable, he states, that the four greatest of all poets, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, are those of whom the least has been told us and the incidents of whose private history are most scanty and uncertain. Homer, he remarks, is a little more than a voice lonely, melancholy, and powerful. Dante is surrounded by darkness and his personality is that of a shade. Shakespeare has been described as a "rich and modest benefactor who knocked at the door of the human family by night—threw in inestimable wealth—fled—and the sound of his footsteps was all the tidings he gave of himself." Of Milton what we know is sufficient only to make us regret that we know no more.

★ ★ ★

The critics and commentators have set Milton apart upon consecrated literary ground. But forget the critics and come closer. You will find that Milton was a most human man. He was not a mere student and a recluse. He loved music and outdoor life. He mingled freely among his fellows, and he was personally liked by many. As a young man he was attractive in his appearance and an object of interest to womankind. He was a many-sided man, a man of strong convictions—and he had a temper. He saw mankind in a clear-eyed, simple, wholesome way, undaunted by titles—and he judged his fellowmen with strict unswerving justice.

His life was as lofty as his genius, and his conversation as rich as his poetry. His literary ideals were as pure and as uncompromising as his religion, and his literary expression was a stream of exalted and splendidly sustained melody.

★ ★ ★

If you would find John Milton, look for him in his works. Many of us know him only through the large, flat, parlor table edition of "Paradise Lost," illustrated by Dore, and more of us look at the pictures than read the text. Pass the pictures next time and try Milton's poems. There is literature that we read and are through with when read. There is literature that we absorb and that becomes part of our lives—and such is the poetry of Milton. A single personal instance illustrates this. I have read Milton's Hymn on the Nativity through every Christmas Eve for fifteen years. Try it, reader of The Mentor. Read it alone if you live alone. Read it in your family if you enjoy the happiness of a family home. Read it as you would sing your Christmas songs—as part of the Yuletide ritual. It broadens and enriches the Christmas festival:

"It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies:
Nature, in awe to him,
Had doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high up hung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the-armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night,
Where in the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began."

Have not these lines a special meaning for us in the present year?

W.D. Moffat
EDITOR



JOHN MILTON AT THE AGE OF TWELVE. BY F. NEWENHAM



JOHN MILTON



BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

Monograph Number One in The Mentor Reading Course



HE father of John Milton the poet was himself an interesting man. As a youth he had a good education and musical abilities. He was disinherited by his father for turning Protestant, and was forced to live for sometime in London by teaching music. Later he became a scrivener or notary and began his business of drawing up wills, marriage settlements, and so on. He had six children, three of whom lived to maturity. John Milton was one of these. He was born on Broad Street, Cheapside, London, on December 9, 1608.

Milton's father prospered, and as he had a good deal of musical talent music formed a good part of the poet's domestic education from his childhood. He received an excellent education, attending in his boyhood St. Paul's Public School, which was near his home on Bread Street.

When Milton was sixteen years old he entered Christ's College, Cambridge. His course there lasted seven years and five months. It was in his second year that he had a quarrel with William Chappell. From this grew the story that Milton was one of the last students in either Oxford or Cambridge to receive corporal punishment. This story deserves no credit; but it is certain that Milton, because of some disagreement with his tutor, left college for a time.

For the first two or three years of his undergraduateship Milton was very unpopular among his college mates. They nicknamed him "The Lady." This may have been due to his personal appearance; but it also conveyed a sneer at his fastidiousness of tastes and morals.

By January, 1629, his intellectual ability had come to be acknowledged, and during the remaining three and a half years of his residence in Cambridge this opinion was more than confirmed. In July, 1632, he completed his career at the university by taking his degree of Master of Arts.

While at Cambridge Milton wrote a number of his most beautiful poems, among them the excellent sonnet, "On Arriving at the Age of Twenty-three," and the magnificent Christmas ode, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity."



JOHN MILTON, BY P. KRÄMER



JOHN MILTON



COMUS AND LYCIDAS

Monograph Number Two in The Mentor Reading Course



MILTON had gone to Cambridge with the intention of becoming a clergyman; but he abandoned this because of the "tyranny that had invaded the church." Then he seemed to have thought for a time of law, but finally decided that the only life possible for himself was one given up entirely to scholarship and literature. His father did not entirely agree with him in his desires; but he did not oppose the plans of the young poet. It was agreed that he should live at his father's home and study literature and write poetry to his heart's content.

About this time he wrote the beautiful pieces "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." Then came "Comus," the longest and most important of all Milton's minor poems.

The name by which this beautiful drama is now known was not given to it by Milton himself. He called it merely, "A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634, on Michaelmas Night, before John, Earl of Bridgewater, Lord President of Wales."

Among the festivities on the assumption of the Earl of Bridgewater to the president of the Council of Wales was a great masque arranged in the hall of Ludlow Castle, his official residence. Henry Lawes, the famous English musician, was commissioned to write the music, and he applied to Milton for the words. This masque was presented on September 29, 1634:

Very little is known of the life of the poet from this time to the beginning of 1637. In 1636 a lawsuit was begun against his aged father by one of his clients, accusing him of having misappropriated some of his money. This lawsuit was still in progress when on April 3, 1637, Milton's mother died at the age of sixty-five. In the same year Milton published "Comus" in printed form. He was in London at the time.

It was probably while there that he heard of the death of Edward King, a young man brilliantly endowed with poetic gifts who had been his friend at college. King had sailed for a vacation visit to his relatives in Ireland. On the 10th of August, the ship struck a rock and went down, carrying him and nearly all the other passengers with it. In November, 1637, Milton wrote his wonderful pastoral eulogy of "Lycidas," in memory of Edward King.





JOHN MILTON



THE GRAND TOUR

Monograph Number Three in The Mentor Reading Course



At the time "Lycidas" appeared, in 1638, Milton had begun a foreign tour. For a long time he had wished to visit Italy, and now he had the opportunity. The lawsuit against his father was at an end, and the elder Milton had won out. Before the end of April, Milton was on his way across the English channel, taking one English man servant with him. At Paris the English ambassador received him politely, and from there he moved quickly to Italy, visiting Nice, Genoa, and Leghorn, and arriving at Florence in August. He was enchanted by this city and its society, remaining there two months. It was near Florence that he visited Galileo, the great Italian astronomer, then old and blind.

He reached Rome sometime in October, and spent another two months there. While at Rome he attended a great musical entertainment in the palace of Cardinal Francesco Barberini. He had there the pleasure of listening to the marvelous Leonora Baroni, the most renowned singer of her age.

Late in November he left Rome for Naples. He had been there hardly a month, however, when news came from England of the breaking out of the civil war there. He decided to return to his native country; for, as he said, he "considered it base that, while my fellow countrymen were fighting at home for liberty, I should be traveling at my ease for intellectual culture." He took the return journey in easy stages. The months of January and February, 1639, were spent in Rome. While there it is said that he was in some danger because of his habit of free speech on the subject of religion. From Rome he went to Florence again. It was not until April, 1639, that he left for Venice, where he spent a month, and thence, having shipped to England the books he had collected in Italy, went on to Genoa, spending a week or two there, returning to Paris and so to England. He was back in England again in August.

Not long after his return his family left the house in which they were living at Horton, and Milton went to live in London. Soon afterward he became absorbed in the religious controversies of the time. There were three parties on the church question. There was the High Church Party, which contended for the maintenance of the English church as it was; there was the Middle Party, which desired to see the powers of bishops curtailed; and there was the Root-and-Branch Party, as it called itself, that desired to see the entire church reconstructed on the model of the Scottish Presbyterian. Milton joined this last party and aided it in its pamphlets.



STATUE OF MILTON, BY HORACE MONTFORD—OUTSIDE CHURCH OF ST. GILES, CRIPPLEGATE, LONDON, ENGLAND



JOHN MILTON



MARRIAGE

Monograph Number Four in The Mentor Reading Course



F Milton's life through the first months of the civil war in England little is known. He remained in his house on Aldersgate Street, London, teaching his nephew and other pupils. About the end of May, 1643, however, he went away on a country journey without saying whither he was going. When he returned, about a month later, it was with a young wife. He had been to the very headquarters of the king and the Royalist army at Oxford—and he brought back with him the bride, Mary Powell. She was seventeen years old, while Milton was thirty-five, and the marriage turned out to be most unfortunate. His wife's family were strongly Royalists, and the girl herself seemed to have been frivolous and little suited for the studious life that Milton led. Hardly was the honeymoon over before she pined for home and begged to be allowed to go back on a visit. This was in July, 1643. From this visit she did not return.

Milton's conduct at this time was very characteristic. He converted his own case into a public protest against the existing law and theory of marriage. He published a pamphlet along this line in August, 1643, declaring that incompatibility between two married persons was a perfectly just reason for divorce. He published a second pamphlet, with his name attached as author, in February, 1644. Authors of such radical tracts ran a great risk at that time, and angry gossip concerning Milton and his writings spread farther and farther round the country. In July the outcry against him reached its height. He was attacked in pamphlets, denounced in pulpits, and the strongest efforts were made to bring him to punishment. But he lived through the winter of 1644-45 undisturbed, and in the summer of 1645 his wife came and begged him to take her back—which he did.

Milton was at this time living in a larger house on a street called Bartican, and kept this until the fall of 1647. His first child, a daughter named Anne, was born there on July 29, 1646. In the following March his father died at the age of eighty-four.

From Barbican Milton moved in 1647 to a smaller house. There he occupied himself with the compilation in English of a complete history of Great Britain, and other works of a scholarly nature. He wrote very little poetry at this time.

When the Scottish army was defeated by Cromwell in the three days' battle of Preston in 1648, Milton rejoiced; and when the king was beheaded the next year the first Englishman of importance out of Parliament to attach himself openly to the new republic was John Milton. This he did by the publication of his pamphlet entitled, "Tenure of King and Magistrates, proving that it is lawful, and hath been so in all ages, for any who have the power to call to account a Tyrant or wicked King, and after due conviction to dispose and put him to death, if the ordinary Magistrate have neglected or denied to do it."

MILTON DICTATING "PARADISE LOST" TO HIS DAUGHTERS. BY M. MUNKACSY





JOHN MILTON



THE RESTORATION

Monograph Number Five in The Mentor Reading Course



N March, 1649, Milton was appointed secretary for foreign tongues to the counselor of state of the new commonwealth. His salary amounted to about \$5,000 a year. He was now forty years old. His special duty was the translating into Latin of letters sent by the counselor of state to foreign rulers; for Latin was the language employed in the written diplomatic documents. But foreign powers held aloof from the English republic as much as they could, and Milton's work was therefore very light. In addition to his duties, however, throughout all this time he was continually writing pamphlets in defense of the new commonwealth. Throughout 1651, also, he superintended the editorial policy of the *Mercurius Politicus*, a newspaper published twice a week.

In about 1651 Milton's eyesight, which had been failing gradually for about ten years, grew upon him rapidly, and in the following May his blindness became total. His only son died in 1652, and his wife died the following year, leaving him with three daughters,—Anne, Mary, and Deborah. His misfortune made it necessary for a modification of his position as secretary. An assistant was engaged for detail work.

In December, 1653, Oliver Cromwell became protector. Milton, who had always been a strong supporter of Cromwell, acted as secretary under him. At first his duties were not heavy; but from April, 1655, on his responsibilities as secretary kept him very busy. He was in much better health and bore his blindness with courage and cheerfulness. His home was the meeting place of friends and visitors and the scene of pleasant hospitalities.

He married for the second time—Katherine Woodcock—on November 12, 1656. For a time he was happy; but after only fifteen months she died, leaving him a widower once more.

The death of Oliver Cromwell on September 3, 1658, left the protectorship to his son Richard. Milton continued in his post. When signs appeared that Charles II would be recalled he protested vehemently against it: to no avail, however; for in April 25, 1660, the Convention Parliament met and on May 1 resolved unanimously that the government by King, Lords, and Commons should be restored. On May 29, Charles II made his triumphal entry into London. Milton was hiding in an obscure part of the city. It is a mystery how he escaped the scaffold at the restoration. The Commons voted that he should be arrested and that all copies of certain of his pamphlets were to be called in and burned. At any rate, he did escape, and on August 29, 1660, when the indemnity bill appeared, he was able to go about as a free man.



BUST OF MILTON, BY BACON—IN CHURCH OF ST. GILES, CRIPPLEGATE, LONDON, ENGLAND



JOHN MILTON



LAST YEARS

Monograph Number Six in The Mentor Reading Course



FEW of Milton's friends came to see him now, and his life was one of solitude. His daughters also neglected him. They rebelled against the drudgery of reading to him and tending to him.

It was to remedy this state of things that Milton married again. His third wife was Elizabeth Minshull, and they were married on February 24, 1663. His wife was only twenty-five years old; while Milton was fifty-five. She proved an excellent helpmate, however, and Milton's household was under better management than ever before.

For sometime he had been working on a great poem, "Paradise Lost." It had been begun in 1658; but he had made little way with it. Now, however, work was resumed and progressed rapidly. He dictated as much as twenty or thirty lines at a time to whomever chanced to be at hand. "Paradise Lost" was finished before July, 1655. It was not until late in 1667 that the poem was finally published. It proved to be very successful; but all Milton got for the manuscript was five pounds down (\$25). Dryden is said to have remarked, "This man cuts us all out"—a strikingly modern expression for Milton's time—"and the ancients too." One consequence of the poet's renewed celebrity was that visitors of all ranks again sought him out for the honor of his conversation and society. Milton's appearance at this time is worthy of description. He had a slender figure of middle stature or a little less. He was generally dressed in a gray cloak or overcoat, and sometimes wore a small silver-hilted sword. He had light-colored hair, a fair complexion, and gray eyes. He was an early riser and very regular in his habits. He loved music. His manner with friends and visitors was extremely courteous and affable.

The remaining years of Milton's life from 1669 on were by no means empty of production. In 1670 appeared his "History of Britain." He had not been able to finish a complete history of England, but had brought it down to the Norman Conquest. In the following year were published his "Paradise Regained" and "Samson Agonistes." In 1674 a second edition of "Paradise Lost" appeared, with the poem rearranged as it is now, in twelve books instead of the original ten.

In November, 1674, John Milton died at the age of sixty-five years eleven months. He was buried in the Church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, beside his father. A great throng attended his funeral.